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A Message From the President, Antonio Meucci Lodge #213



*August 2026
Issue 18*

Welcome to the August Edition of my [*Newsletter*](#). I can't believe it's August already and before you know it Fall will be upon us. So happy to see some familiar faces around the Lodge as people started to return from their vacations. July was a hectic month with all the excitement of celebrating our Nation's 250th Anniversary, the FIFA Championship games, and of course our Italian Heritage Festival. In fact the celebrations are still ongoing with the next major event in our Nation's Capital with the 250 Grand Prix Auto Race to be held on August 22-23, 2026, with the circuit being around the National Mall. Should be fun to watch.

The Spring/Summer Bocce games are coming to an end, with the Quarter Final Games to be played on August 5th. There is definitely a lot of excitement as the games are being played. Still in First place is Team Rosamilia, with Team Vernillo in Second place but close behind in Third place is Team Graziella's. I encourage people to come and watch these final games before we head into the Championship games and Dinner on August 11th. You won't be disappointed.

Congratulations to Italian born Tennis Player Jannik Sinner who won his second consecutive Wimbledon Championship beating



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Alexander Zverev on July 12th. Jannik came from behind to win the Championship and is the most dominant player in the ATP (Association Tennis Professionals) in the World at just 24 years of age. Congratulations Jannik you made your country Italy and us very proud with this win.

The conclusion of the FIFA World Cup Soccer which started on *June 11th and ended on July 19th* was simply amazing to watch. I think everyone across the world enjoyed watching and cheering for their favorite country to win. I was actually in Aruba watching the USA play Belgium. It was so heartbreaking to see them lose 4 to 1, but I was more amazed how many people from all walks of life were just watching the game, and rooting for the best team to win. Once USA was out of the Finals I started cheering for Argentina to win, and the reason being was because of soccer player Lionel Andres “Leo” Messi, the most decorated player in the history of professional “football”. Although Messi was born in Argentina, his family roots can be traced back to the north-central Adriatic Marche region of Italy (with his surname coming from Porto Recanati). The Final game was played on July 19th, Argentina vs Spain, with Team Spain winning 1-0 in overtime. What a thrilling game it was. Third place winner was England who beat France. Congratulations to Spain for winning the World Cup. If you didn’t know this but the trophy Team Spain held up was actually designed in 1971 by Milanese



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Sculptor Silvo Gazzaniga whose winning concept beat out more than 50 submission from around the world. It was crafted by GDE Bertoni, a company based just outside Milan, and has been awarded to every Champion since 1974. The same design, the same craftsmanship, still stands at the center of the sport's biggest moment. So here again, Italy had a presence at the World Cup even if it was behind the scenes with the team holding the trophy.

It's very interesting to note that even though Argentina lost, there are a massive number of Italians living in Argentina. An estimated 25 to 30 million Argentines makeup over 60% of the country's population and have some degree of Italian ancestry. Argentina hosts the second largest Italian diaspora (migration of a population) in the world right after Brazil. The immense Italian influence stems from a massive wave of immigration between 1870 to 1960. It has profoundly shaped Argentine society, culture, and language.

I'm not sure if you are aware but most recently NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani was accused of "Cultural Erasure" after historic Little Italy was omitted from the City's official immigration neighborhoods map. Cultural Erasure is the systematic suppression or destruction of a group's culture, by a dominant power or colonizing force. It goes beyond natural cultural blending by deliberately removing one culture so another can take its place. Once again, leaders from the CSJ and the Columbus Heritage



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Coalition had to step in to fight this injustice. As of right now, NYC Mayor Mamdani said Little Italy will be added to the City's "Immigrant Enclaves" map after the neighborhood's omission sparked backlash from Italian-American leaders and members of the City Council's Italian caucus. Mamdani said and I quote "the map, which highlights immigrant communities across the five boroughs, was never intended to be exhaustive and acknowledged that additional neighborhoods, including Little Italy, will be recognized in a future update". It's also very interesting that other historic immigrant communities remain excluded, including Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, another enduring center of Italian-American heritage; Breezy Point, with its strong Irish-American identity; Astoria, long recognized for its vibrant Greek community, and Borough Park, home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the United States. How can this be? An immigrant Enclave Map should be inclusive, not selective, and blaming this oversight on a previous administration is not an adequate explanation. Leadership carries the responsibility to ensure fairness, inclusiveness, and respect for every community. I'm sure there will be more to come on this topic, but again thanks to the leadership teams of these two powerful organizations that continue to fight the fight for us.

I'm so happy to mention that veteran Actor Armand Assante has been announced as the narrator of *The Streets of Little Italy: 100 Years of the San Gennaro*, a new documentary celebrating the



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centennial of New York City's iconic Feast of the San Gennaro. The film explores the history, traditions and lasting legacy of one of the most recognizable Italian-American celebrations in the United States. The San Gennaro always takes place in September in NYC, so mark your calendars if you would like to attend. This year's Feast is Thursday September 17 through Sunday September 27th.

Just a reminder the CSJ (Commission for Social Justice) is sponsoring another essay contest called the *John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest*. The goal for this contest is to help students better understand their Italian Heritage and Culture. Any students from grades 7-12, can apply. To that end, I hope that as Parents and Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles, you will sponsor and encourage a family member to participate. The interaction between you and the student may present an opportunity to further enhance your family's knowledge of your Italian heritage. One winner will be chosen from each District throughout the State from each grade category. Each winner will receive a \$200 award for his or her essay. Please note all information is posted on our website antonimeuccilodge.com, as well as a separate email was sent out to our membership. All applications must be received by *September 15, 2026*. So I encourage our young students to participate. You never know, *You have to be in it to win it*



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I would like to send *Get Well* wishes to all our members and friends not feeling well especially Sisters Roselle Cucuzza, Jenny Famularo, Dora Pallagrosi, Teresa Rivero, Brothers Umberto Amato, Nick Santoro, Vince Roselli, Anthony Vaccaro, Giacomo Vernillo, and Peter Guastella son to Charles Guastella. May you all experience good health real soon.

To all our members celebrating *August Birthdays*, Buon Compleanno. I hope you all enjoy celebrating your Birthdays.

Congratulations to all our August couples celebrating their anniversary, a very *Buon Anniversario*. I hope everyone has a wonderful time celebrating your Anniversaries, and your day is filled with Joy, Happiness, and most of all Love.

I would like to Congratulate Sabrina Masucci on her upcoming marriage to Kevin. Sabrina is the daughter of Brother Rocco and Sister Anna Masucci. May your day be filled with Love and Happiness for all the years to come.

Congratulations to Brother Dominick and Sister Damiana DiMiceli on the birth of their daughter Rosalia Sofia, and to the Grandparents Brother Pat and his wife Kim Carolini, and to Brother Gino and Sister Maria DiMiceli. The baby is absolutely gorgeous.



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Sending Congratulation wishes to Michael Colasuonno Jr on his recent engagement to Shelly Prestamo. Michael is the son to Brother Mike and Sister Dorothy Colasuonno. So happy for you guys. Here's wishing you a lifetime of love and happiness.

I also would like to extend Congratulation wishes to Sister Rita Maria Carolini and Brother Sergio LaNotte on their recent engagement.. I heard Brother Sergio proposed to Sister Rita Maria at her favorite restaurant and place in the whole world Caffè Wunderbar in Taormina Sicily, as musicians played the song "That's Amore". How romantic. Here's wishing you guys a lifetime of love and happiness.

It's with a heavy heart that I had to announce the passing of Brother Ray Tocci. Brother Ray was a long time member of the Lodge, and he was also a Past Director of the Antonio Meucci Lodge #213 Inc. which handles financial donations of our 501(C)(3) account. Not even a month ago, he and Sister Lucy moved to North Carolina to embark on a new adventure to be with family living in the area. He was a quiet dignified gentleman who will be sorely missed. My deepest sympathies and condolences to Sister Lucy on the passing of Brother Ray. May Brother Ray rest in the Arms of the Lord.



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I also would like to extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to Brother Felice “Don Felice” Cristofaro and his family on the death of his brother Angelo ‘Mike’ Cristofaro. May he rest in the Arms of the Lord.

Also sending sympathy condolences to Sister Vicky Puja and her family on the passing of her Sister-in-Law Rosemarie Abatino. May she rest in the Arms of the Lord

On a sad note, I’m so heartbroken to report that our very own Sister Lisa LaRocca was just recently laid off from Channel 12 Westchester News. Sister Lisa is an Emmy Award winning journalist from the Hudson Valley region for the past 30 years. This lay off is very disturbing to so many people who faithfully listen to her every morning. What we really will miss about Sister Lisa not being on the air is how much she promoted our Italian heritage. She was our advocate. Wishing you all the best Sister Lisa, and thank you for all you did to promote our Lodge.

Unfortunately, we did not attend the NYS Grand Lodge Charity Picnic on July 19th, however I want to mention that we did support the event by buying membership ribbons in the amount of \$120 to support Alzheimer’s, Autism, and Cancer Research. This is in addition to the donations we made at the June Convention for other worthy Charities.



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I understand some areas of Italy, especially Rome, are oppressively hot right now. Because August is the peak vacation season in Italy, many Italians take their holidays around the Mid-August national holiday known as *Ferragosto*. Consequently, some local shops and family-owned restaurants in major cities may close for “ferie” (holiday). *Ferragosto* is celebrated on August 15th, which blends the Catholic Feast of the Assumption of Mary with ancient Roman festivals. Across the country, expect elaborate religious processions, open-air masses, historical parades, and massive fireworks displays. Also on August 15th, Italy is known to celebrate *The Assumption in Orvieto*. The Duomo of Orvieto hosts a magnificent mass followed by the procession of the *Madonna dell’Assunta*, a centuries-old tradition. The *Feast of St. Agatha in Catania* is celebrated on August 17th. This is where Sicily honors its patron Saint with a major summer festival commemorating the return of her relics in 1226. Locals carry her statue through the streets in a highly revered procession. Another event celebrated on August 15th is *The Vara of Messina* which *is* celebrated throughout the city of Messina. It’s a massive towering 15-meter gilded float depicting the Assumption of Mary pulled through the streets by thousands of barefoot devotees.

On *July 23rd*, our Lodge in conjunction with the City of White Plains hosted a free outdoor musical concert featuring Carozza Entertainment. The outdoor event was held at Renaissance Plaza on the corner of Main Street and Mamaroneck Ave, White Plains. It was a magical night of Italian-American music under the stars. People brought



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their lawn chairs to listen to some great music, accompanied by Frank Carozza on the accordion, along with his sons Anthony and Frankie. I also noticed people got up to dance to their favorite songs. We also had a membership booth, saw some old friends and met some new ones, but what was more important we were able to share our love for our Heritage with other ethnic groups.

On *Sunday July 26th* we had our *Italian Heritage Festival* at the Kensico Dam. I'm sure you know this has always been one of our major fundraising events for the Lodge and a day where we get to celebrate our Italian Heritage. The weather was amazing that day, and according to the County there were about 7,000 people in attendance. All I knew was that by 4:30pm we had sold out of Sausage and Peppers. There is so much planning and coordination in order to put this event together and we did it in grand style. We had so many of our Brothers and Sisters volunteer this year to help, too many to name, but I need to personally thank some key people. To Sister Cathy Grisanti who coordinated all the vendors and her helpers Sisters Anna Masucci and Pamela Danza who checked them in on Sunday morning. If I'm not mistaken we had 51 Merchandise Vendors, plus 15 Food Vendors. To Sister Caroline Baviello who was not only our Secretary but coordinated all the volunteers and assigned them their job responsibilities and time slot to work along with Sister Maria DiMiceli who checked them in that day. To Brother Mario Cermele who did all the purchasing, allowing us to prepare the Sausage, Peppers and Onions at his Cafe along with Sister Pamela Danza, and Maria DiSavino. He also arranged for the U-Haul and Penske Trucks along with securing what was needed at Party Line Rentals, and



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Restaurant Depot. A big Thank You to Sisters Lisa Stumpo, and Sister Maria Malandro who handled all the Financials. To Brother Nando who was our MC, and provided music in the Food Court with DJ Rocco Ruscito. To Sister Roselle Cucuzza who handled the Raffle Tickets. Also a special thank you to Brothers Frank Autera, Roberto Caso, Gino and Dominick DiMiceli, Pat Carolini, Frank Landi, Frank Sollack, Joe Monticelli, and Brother Anthony Miceli, to Sisters Rosalia Miceli & Margherita Capicotto who promoted the Festa on Social Media, to Richie Strobel, Marcello Correa, Gerard Pizzo, our Grillers Brothers Mike DiSavino, Lorenzo Santoli, Angelo Magnotta, Dominick D'Ambrosio, Sam Amello, and to our amazing servers and workers at the Sausage and Peepers booth, Brother Joe and Sister Dora Griffo, Sisters Lynda Innocenzi, Angela D'Ambrosia, Filomena DeVito, and so many more that helped. I saw you sweat behind the grills. Thank You. To Sister Lina Amello, Brothers Chris Stumpo, Mike Grisanti, Adam Pacceca, Anthony Gerasia, Carl Calabro, Mike Castellano, and Sisters Antonella Delia, Maria Verde, and Brothers Ed Delia, as well Nick DeMaria who handled all the Beverages, Beer and Wine that we sold. To our Membership and Merchandise Booths volunteers, I need to personally thank new members Sisters Michelle Spiniello, Brenda Magnotta, Brother Robert & Sister Debra Jaffe. They were first time volunteers and I'm sure they were surprised at just how much hard work goes into an event like this. I can't forget Sisters Dina Roselli, Joanne Strobel, Rosa Lippolis, Louise Monticelli and Brother Frank Zappa selling our Italian Merchandise. A special thank you to Brother Joe Tanzi who not only worked in the membership booth but for coordinating with the Veterans to do the Presentation of the Colors to start the program.



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It's a special tribute to our military personnel. May we never forget what our men and women do to protect this great country of ours. This year we also had Sister Mara Persampieri walking around the Festa in authentic costumes from the regions of Molise and Lazio. What a nice addition to the Festa. I also know those costumes were very heavy to wear in such hot weather. Thank you Mara.

I would like to extend a special thank you to our very own past Honoree Sister Lisa Larocca who so graciously was there to introduce this year's Honoree Brother Michael Bellantoni, a long time member of the Lodge and owner of Bellantoni Landscaping Company in White Plains serving the community of Westchester for over 60 years. Brother Michael was so humble and grateful for the honor bestowed on him. His family was equally as excited for him. Brother Michael also received a Congressional Coin presented to him by Brother US Representative Mike Lawler. Brother Mike Lawler is also a proud member of the Rockland OSDIA Lodge. Congratulations Brother Michael it was a well deserved honor you received. I also need to thank County Executive Ken Jenkins for coming and giving his best wishes to our Lodge, and to Brother Michael Bellantoni. He also proclaimed he was "Sicilian". I guess everyone is proud to be Italian on that day.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge some very special people who were able to secure Sponsorship donations. To Brother Tony and Sister Tina Amato for securing over \$6,000, Brother Mario Cermele for securing \$5,000 from Metro Blood, and Brother Anthony Gerasia for getting ConEd to donate \$2,500. We also got donations from members



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of our Lodge. To Brother Michael Colasuonno of MC Tax Consultant & Accounting, and Brother Joe Vultaggio owner of multiple car dealerships in the tri-state area. They are always willing to support the Lodge anyway they can. A special Thank You to Sister Cathy Grisanti who was able to secure quite a bit of grocery produce from Shoprite Supermarket and to Brother Carl Calabro, a new member who was able to get 6 cases of Evian Water donated from his company. All of this helps our bottom line. Again, thank you to everyone. I really appreciate all the support and look forward to next year.

The winners of the Raffle tickets this year I'm happy to say were people from the Lodge. Brother Lucio Gatti sold the \$1,000 ticket to Joe Scaplehorn, Brother Anthony Tornatore Jr. won \$500, and Brother Rocco Marsico won \$250. I have to mention that Brother Lucio every year sells at least 35 books of Raffles, and someone always seems to win from the tickets he sells. Thanks Lucio.

I also need to give a very special Thank You to our musical Entertainers for the day, Pane E Cioccolato and Ella Cristina. They were absolutely amazing. It was so nice to see people singing and dancing to their favorite Italian songs. We received so many wonderful comments about the music and singers.

On *August 4th*, our Lodge in conjunction with the City of White Plains Police Department and Fire Department will be attending their *National Night Out* event. The event is **free of charge** and will feature food, music, activities, bounce house, dunk tank etc. National Night Out is a nationwide community-building campaign that promotes police-



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community partnerships, neighborhood and public safety. Since our Lodge is right in the middle of White Plains, I felt it was important to have a presence at this event. So join us on August 4th, 5:00pm-8:00pm at 77 S Lexington Ave, White Plains

Also in late August early September, many Italians traditionally bottle their tomato sauce (passata). This late summer ritual, sometimes called “Tomato Sauce Day” takes place when Roma and San Marzano tomatoes are at their absolute peak of ripeness, sweetness, and availability. The bottling process involves washing, pureeing, bottling and boiling the jars to seal them. It’s a massive communal effort. Families gather in backyards and garages to process hundreds of pounds of tomatoes at once, ensuring they have enough sauce to last the winter. I know we will be making our sauce in a few weeks. It’s generally a hot, tough grueling day but we all enjoy doing it, and there is nothing better than homemade sauce. Now the Sauce vs. Gravy, is a long- standing debate primarily rooted in Italian-American households. When Italian immigrants arrived in the US, they adapted their native language, and that’s where the debate came about. Since the traditional slow-cooked meat sauce (*ragu*) was rich in meat and drippings, immigrants translated it to “gravy” to bridge the language barrier with Americans. The line is drawn between two primary viewpoints. Team Gravy popularized heavily in East Coast Italian-American communities (like New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia), families use “gravy” specifically when referring to a rich, slow-cooked, meat-heavy tomato sauce that simmers for hours. Team Sauce are those who argue that “gravy” should strictly be brown sauce made from meat drippings or used for dishes like Thanksgiving Turkey. They refer to any pasta topping as sauce, as the



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direct Italian translations for pasta condiments are *Sugo* or *Salsa*. So whether you call it Sauce or Gravy just enjoy it, and know that it was made with love, and a time honored tradition that I hope doesn't go away.

I would like to give a special shout out to hosts Brothers Nando Alpuche, Joe Griffo and Adam Pacecca of The Lions Den @213 Podcast. Your latest edition, a tribute to Sister Rita Cestone, and Sister Lucy and Brother Ray Tocci was very touching and moving. I heard from the Cestone family, and they said it brought tears to their eyes with the tribute to their mother and wanted to thank us for remembering Sister Rita.

Our annual Family Picnic is now scheduled for *September 20th*, at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale, so save the date and come join us. This is another great day of great food, games and camaraderie. The Chairpersons for this event will be Brothers Anthony Miceli, Nick Vaccarelli, Charlie Tota and Mario Cermele. More information to follow.

August is packed with hundreds of quirky, fun and awareness-driven daily holidays many of which focus on food, animals and hobbies. On August 1st it's National Girlfriends Day, followed by National Ice Cream Sandwich Day (August 2), National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day (August 4), with National Dog Day on Aug 26th. Some of the global and national health observances celebrated in August is World Lung Cancer Day (August 1), World Breastfeeding



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Week (August 1-7), Breast Cancer Research Day (August 18), Humanitarian Day (August 19), National Grief Awareness Day (August 30), and International Overdose Awareness Day (August 31). Also let's not forget that on August 8th we get to celebrate *National Zucchini Day*. It's the perfect time to go pick your Zucchini flowers and fry them up. Enjoy.

In closing, Brother Frank and I want to wish all our Brothers and Sisters an enjoyable rest of the summer. Hopefully, we get to see you at the Bocce tournament games, or perhaps on August 4th at the National Night out in White Plains.

To all my Brothers and Sisters may you always remember our motto **Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.**

Sempre Avanti,
President Camille



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